

Public Hearing: December 8, 2014

Date Factsheet Prepared: November 20, 2014

## FACTSHEET

**TITLE:** Agreement for Urban Garden Between City of Lincoln and Community Crops

**BOARD/COMMITTEE:** Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

**APPLICANT:** Community CROPS

**RECOMMENDATION:** For

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** For

**OTHER DEPARTMENTS AFFECTED:**

**SPONSOR:** Lincoln Parks & Recreation Dept.

**OPPONENTS:** None known

### REASON FOR LEGISLATION

To approve a 4-year agreement between the City of Lincoln and Community CROPS to operate an Urban Garden at the west end of Peter Pan Park, between 30<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Streets and Apple and 'W' Streets.

### DISCUSSION / FINDINGS OF FACT:

In 2013, the City adopted a policy for Urban Gardens in Public Parks to provide a consistent and equitable approach to requests for and implementation of Urban Gardens in public parks. The adopted policy recognizes the public benefit offered by urban gardens to enhance underutilized park lands and provide an opportunity for individuals and families to practice personal sustainability and cultivate healthy foods. Gardens may be considered for areas of underutilized park ground that are not currently dedicated or programmed in the future for another use. Crops are to be for home use or for donations, but not for commercial or fundraising purposes.

In 2014, Community Crops was approved for a 6,000 SF urban garden in an underutilized area in the western portion of Peter Pan Park. It was a very successful first year, which is documented in the year-end report attached to this fact sheet. Community Crops has 11 years of experience with urban gardening in the community, with 11 community gardens in the City cultivated by nearly 240 families comprised of 900 people. This year, over 3,500 hours of volunteer labor were dedicated to CROPS' gardens.

Per the adopted policy, the urban garden in Peter Pan Park was initially approved for a one-year period via an Executive Order. The policy states that after the garden and the managing organization are well-established and demonstrate continued success and community support on the site, consideration may be given for a multi-year contract to be approved by City Council. This success has been demonstrated by Community Crops and is the reason for the recommendation of this multi-year agreement.

**POLICY OR PROGRAM CHANGE:** ☐ Yes ☒ No

### OPERATIONAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

The garden in Peter Pan Park does not have an impact on Parks and Recreation operations. CROPS previously contributed the equivalent cost for a new water line to toward the cost of a water well installed by Parks and Recreation in April 2014. The well serves the garden as well as future irrigation improvements to the playfield in Peter Pan Park. CROPS will pay for their share of the electricity for the well and trash pick up.

**COST OF TOTAL PROJECT:** N/A

**RELATED ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS:** \$0.

**SOURCE OF FUNDS:** N/A

**CITY:** N/A

**NON CITY:** N/A

**FACTSHEET PREPARED BY:** Nicole Fleck-Tooze

**DATE:** November 20, 2014

**REVIEWED BY:**

**DATE:**



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**HELPING PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO GROW  
HEALTHY FOOD AND LIVE SUSTAINABLY**

**End of year report  
Peter Pan Park Garden  
11/18/2014**

- **Number of individuals participating**

There were 34 participants at the Peter Pan garden in 2014, representing 117 total people in the households that gardened with Crops. About  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the gardeners were immigrants, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  self-identified as non-white. The majority (67 %) of the gardeners were from low-income households and qualified for either a reduced or waived plot fee from Crops.

- **Types of produce grown**

The produce ranged from standard garden fare (tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers) to sweet potatoes, eggplant, numerous leafy greens (kale, chard and spinach), brassicas (broccoli, cabbage) and various herbs. There were interesting and unique varieties of produce grown by the diverse gardeners at the park.

- **Number of plots used**

We made 35 plots available to gardeners, in addition to a large (20' x 80') community plot maintained by 3 volunteers. In addition, one of our plots was used by the City Impact youth group to facilitate their programming with area children.

- **Estimated hours of community gardening donated**

At least 350 hours of garden work were donated by Crops volunteers who helped with the community plot and maintaining the garden area. This is in addition to Crops staff time and the numerous hours put in by the gardeners themselves.

- **Estimated pounds of produce donated**

In addition to providing space for families in need to grow food for themselves, Crops tries to donate excess produce from our gardens to local charities. At Peter Pan Park, we wanted to expand on that effort by allocating significant space solely to grow produce for donation. In collaboration with the Society of St Andrew's, a local charity that focuses on

directing food that would otherwise be wasted to those in need, Crops was able to donate 200 pounds of food to Lincoln families.

- **Educational activities supported by the garden and number and type of participants**

Crops held a beginning of the year orientation for gardeners, where basics of organic gardening as well as rules for the site were discussed. An Arabic and Kurdish translator was on-site to help facilitate communication with non-English speaking families. In addition, two workshops were organized and held at the garden, covering the topics of Landscaping with Native plants and Pollinator Attracting Flowers. Both were well attended and received very positive feedback.

We elected to hold our annual Garden Gala event at Peter Pan this year to invite the public to the park and to show off the garden. Numerous family-friendly events were available, and free food from local vendors enticed more than 250 attendees.

- **Any issues that arose during the season and how they are proposed to be addressed**

There were a few minor issues throughout the season that are common to our gardens, such as theft of vegetables, gardeners not finishing the season, communication barriers and maintenance of tools and hoses. Crops is working on a plan to increase our outreach with the surrounding community to ensure that neighbors are aware of how the garden works and how they can participate, in hopes of reducing theft from the gardens. We are also investing effort now to better connect with other local agencies (El Centro, the Asian Center etc) that assist local immigrant families with social services. Doing so will allow us to be better prepared to identify translators who can assist with communication with non-English speaking gardeners. Lastly, we are working on a new application process that will better identify successful gardeners and provide more rapid response when a gardener leaves in the middle of the season. Improving retention of gardeners will be an important focus for our staff this winter and into next season.

Recent grants that Crops has received will also provide funding for a technical assistance staff person to teach weekly, free workshops for gardeners on various topics and to work one-on-one with gardeners to address their specific concerns. This program is funded for the next three years, with hopes that we will find additional funding when that ends. The garden at Peter Pan park is one of the 4 main sites this educational program will support.

- **Additional outcomes or information that may be helpful to the organization or to LP&R**

Our staff has been thrilled with the partnership with LP&R and the City and we all hope that future community gardens in city parks is a possibility. We look forward to addressing the issues from this year and building a strong model for additional municipal gardens.